



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Incidents and Legislation in Hungary

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 19, 2013

In Hungary last month, the parliament amended the country's criminal code to include prison terms of up to three years for preparation and distribution of potentially defamatory video or sound recordings. OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatovic stated on November 6 that the longest potential prison sentence is directed at the mass media. We share her concern that these legislative changes may restrict media freedom, lead to the silencing of critical voices, and appear to be inconsistent with our OSCE commitments to freedom of expression and media freedom.

We are concerned as well about expressions of anti-Semitism and veneration of Hungary's wartime regent and Nazi ally, Miklos Horthy. Also, in November, extremists staged a book burning of what they called "Zionist publications," including the work of Hungarian Jewish poet Miklos Radnoti, who was killed during WWII by Hungarian Nazis. In early December, four menorahs were vandalized in Budapest. We applaud the swift action of the police in these cases and the condemnation of these episodes by the Hungarian government. We urge continued vigilance against any future incidents and a redoubling of the continuing fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination.

Thank you, Madam Chair.